

INTERNATIONAL MEETING ON TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION

TRIANGULAR CO-OPERATION AT THE CENTRE OF THE GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

6-7 OCTOBER 2022, LISBON

SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS

Camões – Institute for Co-operation and Language, I.P. / Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Portugal and the OECD Development Co-operation Directorate (DCD), organised the sixth International Meeting on Triangular Co-operation “Triangular Co-operation at the Centre of Global Development” on 6-7 October 2022 in Lisbon.

Around 100 participants from all corners of the world, as well as regional and international organisations, research institutes and civil society organisations, took stock and discussed the future of triangular co-operation as an essential element of global development co-operation. The discussions demonstrated through concrete examples that triangular co-operation is a tool that can help deal with development challenges, navigate in a changing geopolitical landscape, engage in technical diplomacy, link to international agendas such as the G20 and climate agendas and scale up innovations.

The meeting was hosted by Francisco André, Portugal’s Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Co-operation, and organised by the OECD’s Development Co-operation Directorate. Mr Francisco André invited the participants to meet again in Lisbon in 2023 for the seventh edition.

KEY MESSAGES

- In a world with multiple crises, evidence shows that triangular co-operation has demonstrated itself as a **flexible and impactful tool**, supporting countries to tackle COVID-19 recovery, climate change and provide global public goods.
- Triangular co-operation **fosters strategic and inclusive partnerships, leveraging additional resources, supporting local ownership and delivering high-impact results**. It is a useful tool for scaling up innovations from one country to another and sharing home-grown solutions. Still, it is currently under-utilised, and there is a need to invest more in triangular co-operation and support countries in their capacities to engage as partners in the modality.
- Partners in triangular co-operation develop their roles dynamically in the course of their initiative. In doing so, they generate added value compared to bilateral co-operation: all sides learn, share their experience and knowledge, and take on responsibility. Ideally, this will create a [win-win-win situation](#).
- **Emerging trends show that there has been a swift rise in triangular co-operation in Africa and the Asia-Pacific. More needs to be done to continue collecting global data on triangular co-operation and investing in this topic should be a priority.** Triangular co-operation is most often focused on supporting environmental protection, government and civil society and

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tackling health issues - it often involves non-state partners. There is a need to collectively improve the data on triangular co-operation to enhance our understanding and improve the visibility of the tool.

- We need to think more about **innovative funding mechanisms and bring in the financial institutions and development banks to ramp up resources**. UNOSSC has shared plans to establish a new global fund for triangular co-operation to scale up funding and provide a global mechanism for enabling countries to exchange knowledge and learning.
- To better integrate triangular co-operation into international development programming, there is a need to **raise awareness and knowledge of triangular co-operation through clear policies, guidance, staff training and improved reporting practices**.
- Raising visibility for triangular co-operation remains crucial. The challenge is not to preach to the converted **but to reach out to those not yet joining the discussions**.
- New research shows that **triangular co-operation is thriving in Africa**. African governments are mainstreaming triangular co-operation into their national development strategies. As a region, it is engaged in the greatest number of multi-regional triangular co-operation projects.
- **In Latin America and the Caribbean**, the enthusiasm has not dropped during the COVID-19 pandemic – to the contrary, **triangular co-operation has contributed to tackling the pandemic and recovering sustainably**.
- In the **Asia-Pacific region**, triangular co-operation is on the rise as well, enriching existing partnerships, contributing to a diversity of approaches and sharing knowledge across different regions.
- Triangular co-operation is one of many modalities that offers solutions and is delivering impressive results in small island developing states – with the potential to do more on **SIDS-to-SIDS triangular co-operation**.
- We need to do more to **link triangular co-operation better to key global thematic debates**. Not as an end in itself but as a means to delivering high-impact development results and fostering new partnerships and learning, e.g. around climate change.
- Looking to the future, **triangular co-operation can be a useful tool for engaging in technical diplomacy and keeping dialogue open with key partners**. To scale-up its use in coming years, there is a need for mainstreaming processes and more innovative financing mechanisms for triangular co-operation to make facilitate co-designing triangular co-operation projects. We also need to move out of working in silos and take more risks.

Session 1: Taking stock of triangular co-operation as a global modality and looking to the future

Participants took stock of the state of triangular co-operation and reflected on its future given a changing development architecture. The **OECD and Islamic Development Bank** opened the session by

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sharing **some preliminary global data** trends and possible scenarios for the future of triangular co-operation drawn from their new joint report on **“Global Perspectives on Triangular Co-operation”**, to be published in 2023. The data is taken from the OECD’s online project repository for triangular co-operation, ODA statistics and Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD). Four key trends identified were:

- **A swift rise in triangular co-operation in sub-Saharan Africa and the Asia-Pacific region in recent years as its uptake goes global.** While Latin America and the Caribbean continues to be a clear champion of triangular co-operation, it is increasingly being used outside of this region, showing growing confidence in and demand for the modality.
- The popularity of triangular co-operation to advance **environmental protection, support government and civil society and tackle health issues** – all three representing the top sectors for triangular co-operation disbursements between 2019-2020.
- **The high degree of diversity of partners engaged in triangular co-operation**, with almost half of all triangular co-operation projects involving non-state actors - civil society organisations, research institutions and the private sector.
- **Between 2016 and 2020, disbursements by DAC members for triangular co-operation have more than tripled in volume.** The overall volume, however, still remains relatively low compared to other modalities.

SEGIB also shared **key trends on the state of triangular co-operation within the Ibero-American region**, many of which chimed with the global trends. While there is stability in the number of triangular co-operation initiatives per year in the region (120-140 per year), the number of projects increased, and smaller-scale activities decreased. **Agriculture, health and increasingly environment** are the **most popular sectors** for triangular co-operation projects, mirroring the OECD’s global data findings. There is also a **large diversity of actors engaged** in triangular co-operation in the region, with up to 79 countries or organisations engaged in the activity.

The participants and speakers highlighted the need to work together on reporting and collecting **data and evidence on triangular co-operation at the global level**. Without comprehensive and timely data, it is hard to build up the evidence base on what is working and what is not in triangular co-operation and hard to advocate for greater use of the modality. Representatives from Chile, Thailand, the African Peer Review Mechanism and IDOS shared the assessment of a modality on the rise in all world regions, with increasingly vibrant use of triangular co-operation as a tool for peer learning in Africa, interest from EU member states in the modality, and growth in Asia as countries use it to diversify partnerships and benefit from others expertise.

During the **sixth regional conference on triangular co-operation with Latin America and the Caribbean in Berlin** on 7-8 September, participants called for getting more countries and partners involved in the spirit of “preaching to the non-converted” across the globe. The **Global South-South Development Expo in Bangkok**, hosted by the Government of Thailand and co-organised with UNOSSC on 12-14 September, brought together a record high of physical and virtual participants. The spirit and collaborative effort of triangular co-operation was very strong and sharing of experiences and success

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stories in Bangkok inspired greater collaboration, including across regions. The African Peer Review Mechanism and the Government of Uganda are organising the second **Africa High-level Forum of South-South and Triangular Co-operation for Sustainable Development** on 29 November - 1 December 2022 in Kampala, following the successful discussions in Cairo last year, where a network of African representatives started the series of these exchanges. Looking to the future, it was noted that geopolitical tensions are on the rise and could result in a deterioration of global co-operation in the coming years. If this is the case, **triangular co-operation could be an important tool for engaging in technical diplomacy** and keeping dialogue open with other countries.

In order to strengthen triangular co-operation further in the future, there was a call to **move away from working in silos** and **fully mainstream triangular co-operation into global development processes and programming**. There was another call for development providers to **take more risks** and learn by doing in triangular co-operation. It was also noted that we need to reach out to the unconverted by improving our communication on the value added of triangular co-operation, and that this must include reaching out to the next generation and targeting **the youth**. It should be the goal to include youth to build a new triangular co-operation and ensure that new initiatives will be based on the daily-life challenges. Finally, there was recognition of the need for **more innovative funding mechanisms**, especially at the global level, and **greater engagement of regional development banks** in triangular co-operation given their important role.

Session 2: Building triangular co-operation systems throughout development programming

Integrating triangular co-operation into development co-operation programming remains a challenge for many institutions. To live up to the expectations of the BAPA+40 Outcome Document, the OECD initiated a knowledge-sharing exercise on triangular co-operation in 2021 to address the operational challenges of fully embracing triangular co-operation. The exercise is ongoing and all participants and their partners are invited to join future workshops. Participants heard reflections from Germany, Spain and Norway on what had been explored so far during the exercise their individual reflections on the exercise. Three key topics were discussed in breakout groups:

Raising awareness and enhancing the evidence base – In order to integrate triangular co-operation better into development co-operation programming, there is a real need to raise awareness amongst senior leadership, programme staff and partners and improve the knowledge base on triangular co-operation. The development of clear policies, guidance and staff training are vital steps to establishing the mandate for triangular co-operation and raising awareness. Programme management systems need to be adapted to accommodate triangular programming. Improving the organisation's reporting systems is also important to strengthen the evidence base on triangular co-operation. Change is complex and will often be met with resistance - having champions and agents of change within organisations on triangular co-operation can help to ensure its sustainability.

Monitoring and evaluating triangular co-operation - In order for triangular co-operation monitoring and evaluation to be effective, **all partners should be involved in designing the terms of reference**

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for **monitoring and evaluating** the project, following a joint methodology. Funding needs to be included in the project budget from the start. There is a **need for clarity around the objectives** of the triangular co-operation project, especially as this may differ amongst partners.

There was a **call for greater guidance** on monitoring and evaluating triangular co-operation including the development of a specific set of indicators for triangular co-operation projects and programmes **and on how to monitor and assess the partnership goals of a triangular co-operation project/programme** as these are often not written down and only implicit. The OECD noted that it would be updating its [Toolkit on Identifying, Monitoring and Evaluating the Value-Added of Triangular Co-operation](#) and would share with participants the refreshed version in light of this feedback and the discussions in the knowledge sharing exercise.

Communicating triangular co-operation – There was consensus that at present triangular co-operation is under-utilised and that communicating effectively about the benefits of triangular co-operation is vital. It was agreed that there is a **need for clear and concise messages that are tailored to specific audiences and stakeholders**. We need a different set of pitches for example for political leadership than for the general public or external stakeholders. It is important to tell the story - human related stories - so to better explain the impact of triangular co-operation. Advocacy needs to be complemented by communication on results - we should communicate about results and impact and not about the concept only.

Launch and presentation: Triangular co-operation with Africa

The OECD launched its new paper on “[Triangular Co-operation with Africa](#)” at the meeting. The paper shows that **triangular co-operation is thriving in Africa, with the continent engaged in the largest number of multi-regional projects**. Triangular co-operation projects in Africa attract larger budgets and have longer durations in comparison to other regions in the world. The paper finds that **triangular co-operation is a useful tool for supporting the AU’s Agenda 2063 and tackling digitalisation, environment/climate change and, demographic change** – some of the megatrends identified for the continent by the African Union.

Government representatives from **African countries and the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP)** shared how they are **mainstreaming triangular co-operation into their national development strategies** and building up their capacity to manage and engage in it. Providers of development co-operation noted that they are engaging in triangular co-operation in Africa to **maximise their existing bilateral or multilateral relationships with countries on the continent, break down North-South relationships** and foster mutual learning.

It was highlighted that it is extremely important to engage local communities, listen carefully to the needs and specific circumstances in the partner countries to ensure that lessons from one country are **properly adapted to the local context within another** country. The important role of civil society organisations and academia as partners in triangular co-operation and as providers of expertise was highlighted in this regard.

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Launch and discussion: Promoting triangular co-operation with Latin America and the Caribbean for a speedy and sustainable COVID-19 recovery

All countries, regardless of their development level, have been impacted by COVID-19 and have lessons to share on what worked. The development co-operation community is at a **strategic moment to harness effective partnerships for horizontal knowledge sharing and innovative thinking**. Countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and OECD DAC members are natural partners as they share many values and work towards achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Against this background, SEGIB and OECD launched and discussed their joint policy brief on ["International development co-operation after COVID-19: prospects for strengthened triangular partnerships between Latin America and the Caribbean and OECD members"](#).

Experiences of the speakers and participants showed that co-operation is the only way forward in times of crises and we need trusting partnerships more than ever. During a pandemic, we need a collective response, including when bilateral approaches are at times delayed, **and triangular co-operation has proven to be a flexible tool to respond to the COVID-19 crisis**. When co-operation mechanisms are already in place, responding to new crises is faster.

The speakers and participants noted that triangular co-operation projects in Latin America and the Caribbean were not only targeted at immediate emergency response, but also **focused on a diversity of sectors ranging from food security to social inclusion, economic response, and sustainable ecological transition**. Existing structures were quick in adapting to the new situation and offered additional support for partners in LAC. Going forward, there is potential to build on these experiences and lift the partnership with LAC to a higher strategic and political level based on the good experiences of joining forces during the pandemic in triangular co-operation projects.

Session 3: Scaling up innovations through triangular co-operation

Triangular co-operation is a useful tool for scaling up innovations in one country to another and sharing home-grown successes with others. Participants heard how triangular co-operation is being used to share innovations for improving public sector workers' performance, enhancing productivity, tackling corruption and in disaster resilience infrastructure from the Caribbean to the Pacific and Indian Ocean.

It was noted that one of the most important factors for success is **ensuring there is demand for the innovation from the beneficiary country** – the innovation being transferred must fill a real need within the beneficiary country and be fully owned. It was also noted that it is important to **foster high level political buy-in** for the triangular co-operation project in order to ensure there is agreement on key objectives and outcomes. This high-level political buy-in needs to be **supported by a strong technical capacity** with clear internal rules for running the project across all partners involved in the transfer.

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Governments can be proactive in building centres of excellence in core areas where they know they have leading innovations in order to build capacity for sharing with others and transfer. It was also acknowledged how important it is to have **processes in place for spotting innovations in partner countries that could be transferred to others**. Finally, it was noted that there is a **need to communicate better** about how triangular co-operation is enabling the scaling-up of innovations across countries.

Participants identified the following **key ingredients for success** in scaling up innovations via triangular co-operation:



Session 4: Triangular co-operation supporting the climate agenda

Globally, there is a **wealth of expertise and often low-cost solutions** to addressing climate change (mitigation and adaptation), which is beginning to be shared and scaled up via triangular co-operation projects and programmes. Participants heard how **triangular co-operation is being used to share the latest solar power technology** for schools in remote areas, how it is **supporting Small Island Developing States (SIDS) that are often on the front line in terms of tackling climate change to maximise the blue economy** to improve livelihoods, food security and gender equality, strengthen their resilience to disasters and sustainably manage water and energy resources. Participants and speakers noted that **triangular co-operation is one of many modalities that offers solutions and it is delivering impressive results in small island developing states – with potential to do more on SIDS-to-SIDS triangular co-operation**.

While triangular co-operation projects focused on addressing climate change appear to be thriving, the modality is **often absent from international debates on climate change** and is not being sufficiently promoted as a good modality for helping countries to meet their climate commitments. It

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was noted that **there is a need to better link the modality at the national and regional level to global debates** happening at the UNFCC, the G20, and the G7 on climate change and the environment. The **capacity of developing countries needs to be built up** to enable them to better showcase their innovations on climate change at global moments and encourage scaling up via triangular co-operation. There is also a need for **greater communication efforts by all** partners in global processes to highlight the strengths of the modality in delivering impact on climate change.

Global Partnership Initiative (GPI) Marketplace on Effective Triangular Co-operation

During the Marketplace, eleven GPI members and partners presented their triangular co-operation ideas or challenges, aiming at identifying additional partners, learning from the experiences of others and fostering new triangular co-operation opportunities.

The GPI Marketplace is a series of matchmaking workshops for stakeholders to interact and share ideas and challenges, ultimately aiming to prospect opportunities for new triangular partnerships. The GPI hosted the third edition of the Marketplace during the 6th international meeting on triangular co-operation. On this occasion, eleven speakers were clustered in four focus groups: **(i) innovative triangular co-operation mechanisms, (ii) capacity development, (iii) strengthening triangular co-operation systems, and (iv) scaling-up development solutions** and ideas through triangular co-operation. In a dynamic format, all participants had the chance to circulate in all four groups and exchange ideas with the presenters.

Among the various interactions during the Marketplace, three examples include, e.g. the Saudi Fund for Development being interested in the possibility of scaling-up the mapping of resource centres presented by the Palestinian International Cooperation Agency (PICA), the Islamic Development Bank (IsDB) showed interest in the Rome-based agencies programmes to strengthening national home-grown school feeding programmes, and Norway exchanged with Brazil to learn more about its work on capacity development in management of South-South and triangular Co-operation. The GPI will follow up, acknowledging that the event is the first step towards new partnerships. For more information on this and past editions of the Marketplace, access www.triangular-cooperation.org/marketplace.

Actions until 2023

Following the discussions during the sixth international meeting on triangular co-operation, all participants are invited to engage in some follow-up actions until we meet again in Lisbon in 2023:

- Continue **stepping up efforts in reporting and collecting data on triangular co-operation** – we have made progress since the last Lisbon meeting, but still need to do more.
- Work on **improving our tools for monitoring and evaluation** – both for standalone triangular co-operation initiatives and components of larger development programmes.

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- **Improve our communication on triangular co-operation** and adapt it for different audiences – from the elevator pitch for the minister to the taxi pitch for the general public and social media material.
- Continue research and activities to **showcase the important role that triangular co-operation can play in scaling up innovations**.
- **Link triangular co-operation better to global agendas and topics** and as a tool to provide global public goods, such as tackling climate change. We cannot continue working in silos. Climate change does not stop at borders - we have to work together and co-operate.
- **Join the OECD's knowledge sharing exercise on triangular co-operation** – all participants are invited to contribute to future workshops.
- Follow up from our “shopping” and “selling” at the **marketplace**. We have developed ideas for new initiatives and exchanges on triangular co-operation and the GPI on Effective Triangular Co-operation can support the follow-up.
- Take the outcomes from this meeting to the third **High-level Summit of the Global Partnership for Effective Development Co-operation (GPEDC)** in Geneva on 12-14 December 2022.